When My Ship Comes Home

by

Clara E. Laughlin

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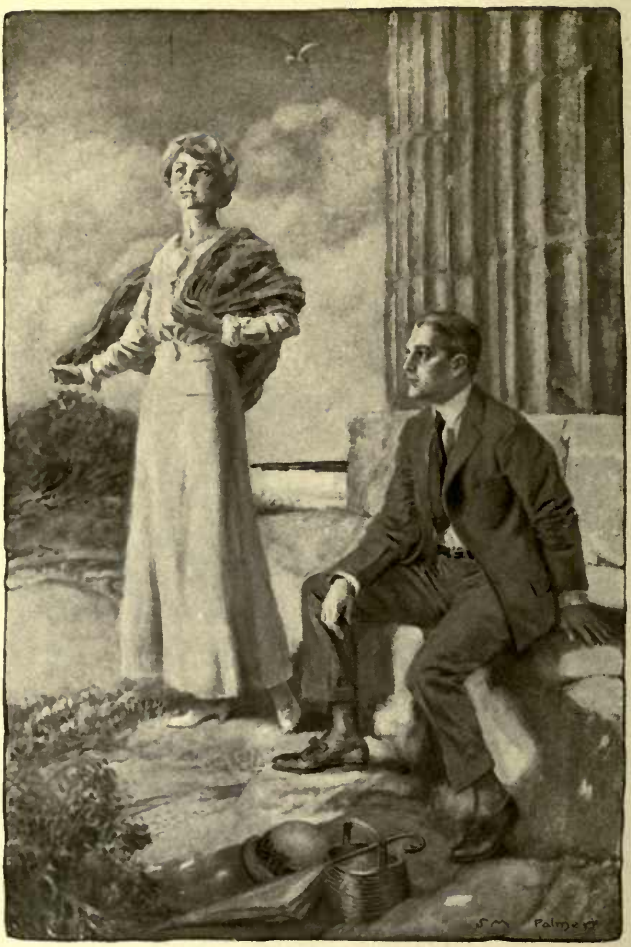

"This place had laid hold on him and bound him as with a spell"

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CLARA E. LAUGHLIN

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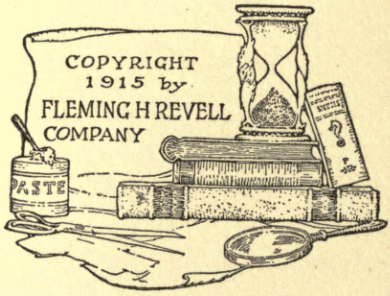

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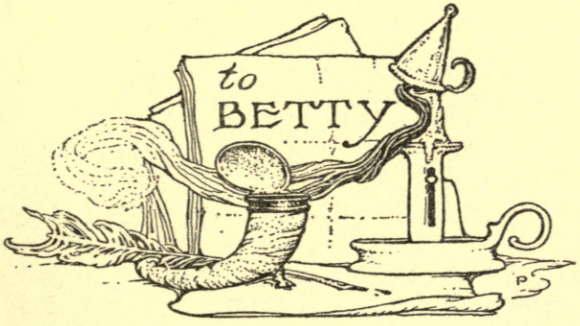

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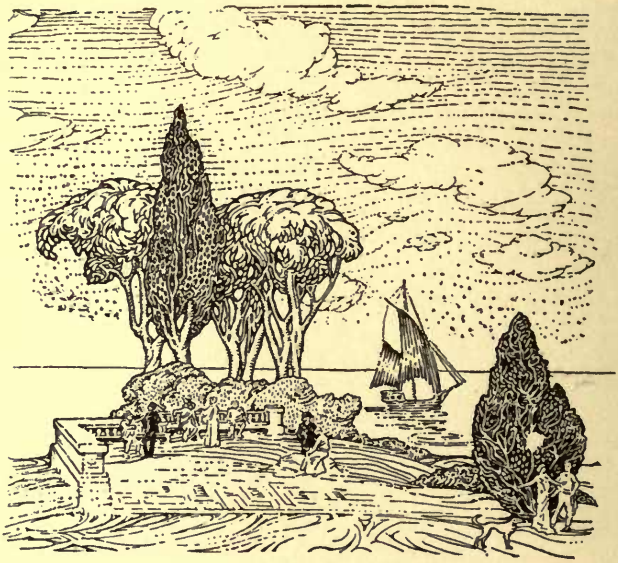

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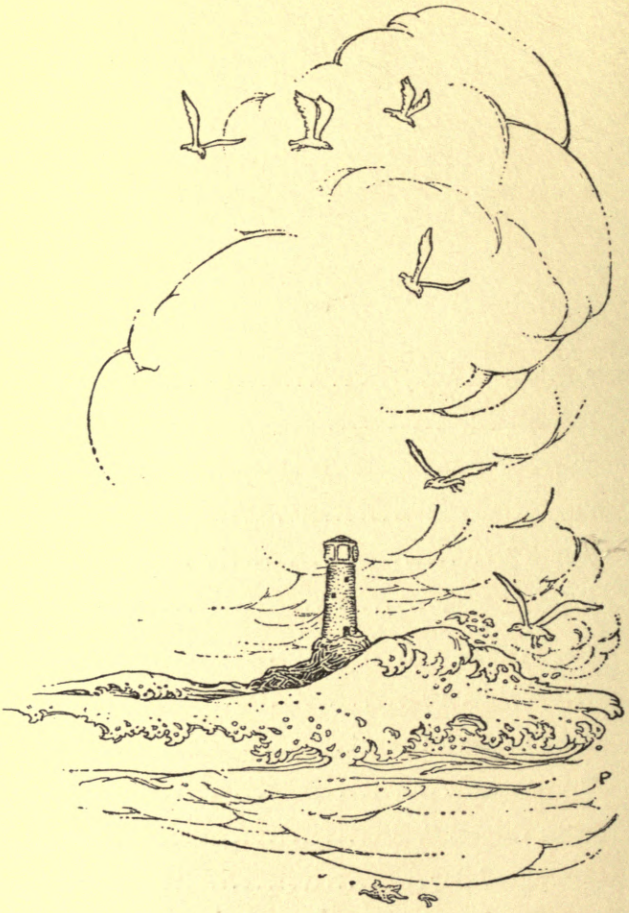
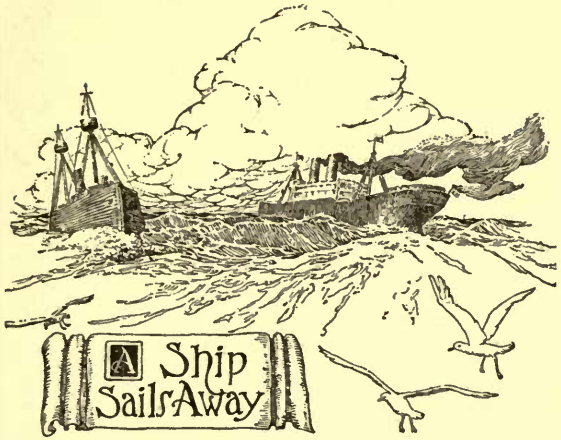




"I'm afraid it's going to be dull for Ella Marie," said Ella Marie's father, self-accusingly.

"I spent my summers there, when I was about her age, and it wasn't dull for me," answered Ella Marie's mother.

"Your grandmother and Aunt Una were more than twenty years younger, then."

"Yes; but I don't think they were very different. They had done all their changing even before that. Perhaps they seemed as old to me then as they do

now, because I was so young then. But their 'oldness' never dulled life for me. I can hardly think of any price that could buy from me—if such things were salable!—my memories of the time I spent there. I've always wanted Ella Marie to have at least one summer in the old home. And now that Aunt Una has invited her, I can think without compunctions of Europe for myself."

"I still feel as if we ought perhaps to strain a point, and take her."

"I don't, dear! If we were going to one place, to stay and soak it in, it might be different. But to hop-scotch around as we must do, would be bad for her and harder for us if we had her to worry about. She'd get tired out, and have a jumble of impressions. She has too-constant stimulation now. What she needs is a chance to *dream*. What we dream, when we are young, matters

lots more than what we see—and matters longer, too. I want Ella Marie to dream and dream about the Old World before she sees it—to dream about it the way you and I have! If I could have my wish for her, it would be that few of the precious things of life may come to her until she has been very wistful for them. At the best, there are too many—like youth, and health—about which we can never grow eager until we have lost them."

"Right, little mother! And wise, as usual. I know what it costs you to leave your baby behind—only a far-sighted love could make you do it."

So it was settled that when Rob and Nannie Risler went on that "two-months' pilgrimage to the whole of Europe," as Rob called it, Ella Marie should not be dragged, breathless, from Naples to Edinburgh, but should go to the old home of her mother's

people at Gloucester, Massachusetts. Rob had not felt, until now, that he could spend two months away from business; he did not know when he might be able to go again. Hence the comprehensiveness of the tour planned, and the necessity for unremitting travel and sight-seeing.

They were to sail from Boston; and Nannie went on, from Chicago, several days ahead of sailing-time, so as to be with Ella Marie in Gloucester while the child made acquaintance with her new surroundings. Nannie had told her little girl, almost from cradle days, delightful stories of her own childhood in the old house and down at the shore, watching the ships come in. Ella Marie was very much more eager to enter that story-book atmosphere wherein her mother had been a little girl, than she was to wander in the greater story

book lands across the sea. But her ten-year-old heart was heavy with the thought of parting, and with anxiousness about what might befall her parents when they got so far away from her.

"I know just how she feels," Nannie told her Aunt Una. "I can remember it all, as though it were yesterday. I don't need anyone to remind me what capacity for suffering we have when we are ten. I knew, of course, that it wasn't my presence, my nearness, which kept my parents from harm. And yet, somehow, their liability to illness or accident seemed to increase a thousandfold when we were separated — even though it was I who went away and left them safe at home. I endured tortures of apprehension on their account. Sometimes it has almost seemed to me as if I suffered more, all through my youth, dreading their death, than I

did in the actual wrench of parting from them. Now, what do you think I ought to do about our sailing—let Ella Marie stand on the dock and see us sail away, or say good-bye to her here and not give her any mental pictures of the gangplank coming in, the stay-behinds weeping, the water widening between us and the shore? For my part, I don't know how I'm going to stay on the ship and see Ella Marie on the dock, left behind. But that's not the point. I want to do what's best for her."

Aunt Una nodded comprehendingly.

"Dear, dear!" she said. "How the old problems come back with the new lives! It used to be a great anxiety to Mother to know what was best for your mother and me: whether to let us see father sail away, or to try to keep us from thinking about it until after he was gone. She, poor dear, always suf-

fered agonies when the *Gloriana* spread her wings for one of those long, slow flights of hers to lands half-'round the world. But there's this about children —and in some degree about most of us —retrospection isn't as strong as anticipation. Something in us keeps us looking forward more than back; even mother, at eighty-three and full of reminiscence, looks ahead, and Beyond, eagerly. So we, when we were children, while we used to weep heart-brokenly when Father went away, soon began to think about his homecoming and to dream of what he might bring. I believe I'd let Ella Marie see you sail. She will cry; she will suffer—for a while. But it will make her expectancy so much keener. Life doesn't grow richer for any of us without our hours of anguish—does it? "

Ella Marie tried to be very good about

the parting. She knew how hard it was for her parents, and she had, though she was only ten, a desire quite as earnest as she could have had if she were forty, to speed them on their way as cheerfully as possible. She had schooled herself, in her own dear little fashion, to be brave—until after they were gone. Then, of course, she would be quite heart-broken; but they should never know it—never! The prospect of her bravery upheld her not a little. But when the day came, the vision of her heroic young self grew dim; the sight of her parents waving to her from that upper deck, of the foaming water widening between them, reduced her to the merest little-girlishness. She sobbed convulsively as she clung to Aunt Una.

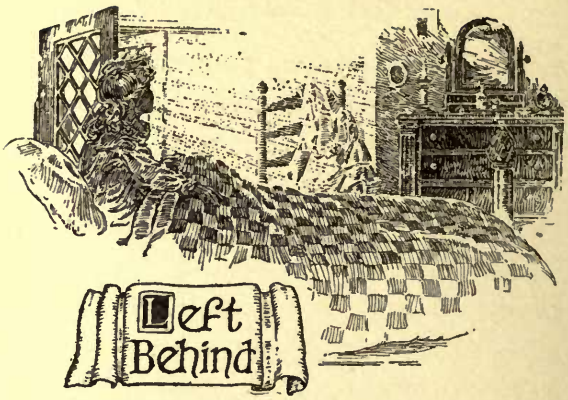
"I can't bear it!" she thought. And in the train going back to Gloucester she pondered the extreme probability of her

death from grief, and pictured the wild woe of her parents, landing at Naples a fortnight hence and learning that their child "slept with her fathers" in the old burying-ground at Gloucester. The poignance of this, and the drama of it, withdrew her thoughts from the ship sailing out of Boston Bay, and focused them upon the young life so soon to enter upon its closing scenes.

Aunt Una, who was, in fancy, feeling the rocking billows and tasting the tang of the salt breeze, as she had all her life longed to do in fact, was recalled to consideration of the absorbed young person beside her, by a plaintive query.

"If I—if one of us Rislers died, Aunt Una, would I—would she be buried in the Parton plot with—with her fathers?"

And Aunt Una, remembering as though it were yesterday, answered most gravely: "Yes—she would."



After having cried herself to sleep, in the dark, Ella Marie awoke in the bright sunshine of a June morning so refreshed that it was several minutes before she remembered her misery and her impending demise.

Then she lay very still for quite a long while and pictured the not-distant morn when Aunt Una should come tiptoeing to the door to wake the little girl who would never wake again. Ella Marie could see it all so vividly. The

sun would be streaming in the east windows, just as it was now; and on the back of the little, rush-bottomed chair near the bed would be hanging a little girl's dress, while on the chair would be her underwaist and panties and petticoat, and beside it her shoes and stockings. A friend of Mrs. Risler's had lost a two-year-old baby, and Ella Marie had heard it said that the baby's mother cried over his little scuffed shoes more than over anything else that belonged to him. Ella Marie raised her head from the pillow slightly, to see just how pathetic her shoes would look when the little feet that once had carried them hither and yon, were become forever still. Then she went on picturing how Aunt Una would look at the motionless small figure in the large four-poster bed, and think Ella Marie was sleeping; then how she would speak, and get no

answer; how she would lean over and touch the marble brow of the quiet sleeper, and then break into bitter sobs, crying " She has died of a broken heart, our lovely Ella Marie! "

Just then, unaware of the sorrow that was so imminent, Aunt Una opened the door.

" I wonder," she said, quite gaily, " if any little girl in here knows that it is 'most eight o'clock? "

She was smiling and playful. Ella Marie almost wept as she thought how soon this pleasant lady was to be plunged into the depths of woe.

" I've been awake a long time," she answered—indeed, she felt as if she had scarce slept at all—" but I didn't know just what time it was."

Already she was beginning to feel somewhat withdrawn from earthly things, and yet—the thought of breakfast was

not wholly repugnant. Also, even with so large a part of her mind occupied with thoughts of death, she could not help noticing that in her hand Aunt Una had a quaint little box.

"It just occurred to me," Aunt Una began, holding the box toward Ella Marie, "that you might care to wear these, sometimes, while you are here. My father brought them to me from Naples. Nearly everyone who visits Naples buys corals, it seems. I dare say you'll be getting a string of your own from there, now."

How little she realized!

Yet it was with a fair show of interest that Ella Marie opened the box which had a sliding top of elaborately inlaid wood, and took from its bed of cotton a string of coral beads of a rosy pink.

"I thought they'd be so pretty on you

because you're fair," Aunt Una said. "Shall we try them on?"

Obligingly Ella Marie bent her head while Aunt Una clasped the necklace about her throat. Then, also with a very pretty air of pleasing, she obeyed Aunt Una's suggestion to "hop out of bed and over to the looking glass, and see how we like them."

"Come to think of it," Aunt Una said, musingly, as they gazed into the old mirror, "it was in this very glass that I first saw how they looked on *me.* I must have been about ten—let's see: it was the year Father brought home the little monkey from Tangier, and Mother's beautiful lace shawl from Gibraltar, and the silk sashes from Sorrento for your Grandma and me—yes, I must have been just about ten. And I remember that I came in here to look at myself with my necklace on. Dear,

dear! I can see her now, that other little girl of ten, standing beside you. She didn't have such pretty curls as yours—hers were darker, and curled tighter, and she always used to wish they were blond. Her eyes weren't a lovely gray, either—they were kind of light hazel and nobody ever called them pretty. But *inside* she was rather a nice little girl, I think. I know she used to have ever so many good times with the things she 'made up in her head.'"

"I wish she was here, now," Ella Marie sighed, lonesomely.

Aunt Una's face wore, for a brief moment, an expression Ella Marie could not understand. Then she said,

"Maybe she isn't so *very* far away! Maybe, if you wear her coral beads, and think about her, and if I tell you about her, you'll feel as if she were with

you, sometimes, even though you can't see her."

"Maybe," admitted Ella Marie, doubtfully. "What became of the little monkey?"

Aunt Una smiled, and again there was what Ella Marie called "a quirk" to it that she felt she did not understand.

"He stayed here a while, and then, by and by, he went to live in Boston, at the Zoo in the Park."

"Why did you give him away?" Ella Marie asked. "Did he grow too big?"

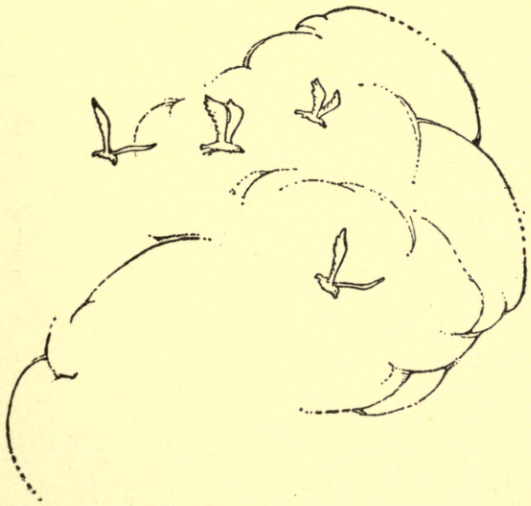
"He didn't grow at all, after we got him. But the little girls grew; and by and by they no longer cared for Jocko as a playmate."

"Was he much fun to play with?"

As they talked, Aunt Una was helping Ella Marie dress; not that Ella Marie needed much help, but just by

way of sociability, and because it was not every day that Aunt Una had someone to remind her of the little girl she used to be and the little girl she never had.

When Ella Marie was ready, they went downstairs into the sunshiny room where Greatgrandmother Parton was sitting.



The Stuff that Dreams are made of

Fourscore-and-three was Greatgrandmother Parton — which is no great age now, as everyone knows, but seemed greater twenty years ago, because Greatgrandmother had been wearing caps and kerchiefs and considering herself an old lady for forty years and more. She was not really feeble, but thought she ought to be; so she kept, for the most part, to her arm-chair. Ella Marie had never before known anyone of advanced age, and she inclined to be just

a little bit afraid of Greatgrandmother, as if the gulf of years that yawned between them—more than a Biblical span were too wide to be bridged. Greatgrandmother knew how she felt, and was content to await developments.

The room in which Greatgrandmother sat was one Nannie Risler had so often described in her "When-I-was-a-little-girl" stories, that Ella Marie thought she would have recognized it if she had come upon it "in Africa"—that being her usual equivalent for the uttermost parts of the earth.

It was an east and south room, on the left of the hall that divided the old four-square house; back of it was the dining-room, with windows opening into the garden; across the hall were the parlors, seldom profaned by any common use, and kept in dignified gloom. The kitchen was in an ell. Family life

centered in the sitting-room and dining-room, and—these summer days—in the sheltered, deep garden behind the house.

In the sitting-room, Greatgrandmother kept those of her cherished possessions with which she felt on the most intimate terms. Over in the dim parlors there were high cabinets in black and gold lacquer, chairs and stools in carved teakwood, a table with an inlaid marble-top from Florence, and a a mirror in a fearfully ornate setting of Venetian glass; there were carved elephant tusks, and Chinese embroideries, and Persian rugs, and big cloisonné vases, and bronze Buddhas, and Satsuma bowls. Even Nannie, as a little girl, had never felt very well acquainted with any of these things. There was that in the atmosphere of the parlors which made them like a museum. You went in there, sometimes, if you were a

roaming little girl always in search of mental adventure; you marvelled at the strangeness of most of the things, and wished you might have heard your grandfather tell tales of how and where he got them; but you seldom ventured on your own account to " make up " stories about them—it scarcely seemed fitting somehow.

But the sitting-room was different. It had the Bay of Naples wall-paper which, in many a New England house, invited the fancy of the circumspect beholders overseas to where, in the southern sunshine's warmth, diaphanously draped muses dance perpetually around Virgil's tomb, and great galleons, their strange pinions furled, ride ever at anchor beneath the smoking cone of grim Vesuvius.

From one of those marble palaces whose white feet were languorously

lapped by the deep blue and tideless sea, must have come, surely, the old Italian desk, or *scrutoir*, which stood in this sitting-room, its faded tints and dulled gilt hinting what its pristine splendor must have been, and its sliding panels and secret drawers suggesting such "missing papers" and poison powders and love philtres and other things as could only, with true appropriateness, have happened in Italy and, most fittingly of all, in Naples. Stowed away in those hiding-places which had once, presumably, concealed daggers and lost wills and poison rings, Greatgrandmother had an inexhaustible store of such stuff as stories are made of. At almost any turn of the conversation, she was likely to say: "If you will open that littlest drawer on the left, near the top, you will find so-and-so. Bring it here, and I'll tell you about it."

That is, thus had been her wont when Nannie was a little girl; and thus, Nannie had felt sure, would be her wont with Ella Marie.

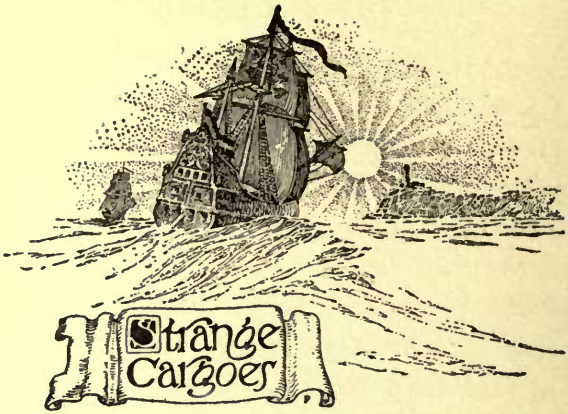
For Greatgrandmother had been to Naples, on her wedding journey. It was the only voyage she ever made, but its glories had not grown dim in more than threescore years. Indeed, they seemed to grow brighter, as these quiet, fireside years went by; and she loved, as she sat here knitting or doing other things befitting a very old, old lady to think what an adventurous soul hers was, and how, though her body creaked and was fain for ease, her spirit still leaped and strained at its leash and was eager for far foray. And, to look at her, with her blue eyes beaming kindly and her white hair smoothed so meekly and her shriveled cheeks pink with the healthfulness of a careful, cambric-tea

life, you would never have guessed what joy it was to her to remember that she had been down in that crypt of the Castel Nuovo where are the petrified bodies of the strangled bishop and the dismembered general and the headless lady; that she had stood near the spot whence Tiberius caused his ex-favorites to be hurled into the sea; that she had once seen a real Corsair, and had once been witness to an exciting capture, by the Naples harbor police, of a smuggler.

But Greatgrandmother's interests were not all sanguinary. Suppose it chanced to be the walnut what-not, instead of the polychrome *scrutoir* from which she directed you to bring something. *That* "something" would be from under seas, not from over. There were sea-urchins and star-fish and abalone shells; there was a sea-horse from the Indian ocean, and a sea-anemone that had once un-

folded its delicate " flower " in the bed of Gloucester Bay. And there were branches of coral—some that looked like mushrooms, and one that looked like a human brain, and one that was like a fairy-fine point-de-Gènes fan. Greatgrandmother could tell marvelous tales about the wonderland that lies fathoms deep beneath the keels of ships.

But, during the few days of Nannie's stay Greatgrandmother had been so eager to hear the details of the projected tour that there had been little time to repeat any of those so-familiar tales with which Nannie's ardor for this journey had first been fed.



Ella Marie dreaded sitting at the breakfast table opposite that vacant place where, yestermorn, her own dear mother sat. But it seemed that she was not expected to. Aunt Una asked her if she would mind presiding at the coffee urn! Now, if there was anything in the entire world that Ella Marie had more eagerly desired than to turn the spigot of a silver urn under which a tiny alcohol flame burned, and pour cups of fragrant coffee for other folks

to drink, I am not able to say just what it was. Of course she had not mentioned this desire to anyone—certainly not to Aunt Una. Therefore, it must have been by the merest chance, and not with any idea of diversion, that Aunt Una made this request. (But not only had Aunt Una once been ten: she had, at ten, known that identical coffee-urn; but she had never, at ten, been invited to preside behind it, although she had often made wistful computations of just what the consoling power of this privilege would be.)

Ella Marie was glad she had not died before breakfast; and when Aunt Una asked her if she would mind presiding thus *every* morning, Ella Marie hoped that her decline might not be too hasty.

After breakfast, Aunt Una had housekeeping tasks to attend to, and Great-grandmother returned to her chair in

the south bay-window of the sitting-room. Ella Marie followed her. She was suddenly mindful, once more, of her lone condition: she didn't "know a soul" in Gloucester except these two old ladies, and she didn't have "a single thing to do." At home, there were always so many things to do that she could never do all of them she wanted to. Here, there was nothing! True, she had promised that she would "practice" at least an hour every day. But that was only one hour, and there would be—she calculated—about nine more hours with not a thing to do in any of them. Instead of putting off practicing because she hated it, she thought she would postpone it to-day so as *not* to "have it over with;" so as to have "*something* to look forward to!"

Thus disconsolate, she stood in the sitting-room, a pathetically "strange"

little creature, purposeless and rudderless.

Greatgrandmother watched her for a few moments, knowing exactly how the child felt, but not knowing exactly what to do about it. Then she said, looking out through the open window and speaking as if to herself rather than to anyone else:

"Well, well! it's a fine day to-day. I wonder will my ship come home!"

Ella Marie looked at Greatgrandmother. "Have you a ship?" she said. "I didn't know—"

"Thought I was too old—didn't you, dearie?"

"No, not at all," Ella Marie hastened to say; but her tone was more polite than convincing.

"You always have 'em," Greatgrandmother went on, smiling whimsically, "but the cargoes change."

Of course! Ella Marie didn't know a great deal about ships, but she knew *that:* " the cargoes change."

"When I was a little girl," said Great-grandmother, " I used to be sad quite often, when my father sailed away. And the girls who were my friends most of 'em had sea-faring fathers, too. But we were always looking for them to come back, and bring us gifts from far countries, and tell us tales of all they'd seen. When you got up, of a morning, you never could tell *whose* ship'd come home that day. It was exciting—being on the lookout all the time. I've often thought life must be mighty dull for folks that don't live near the sea—but I s'pose they have their own ways o' lookin' for'ard. They *must* have! *Every*body must! But, say your father just walks a half a mile into town to his store or office, an'

comes home to dinner every noon—it can't be as excitin' and full o' thrills as when he goes sailin' far away, and you spend days an' days lookin' for'ard to his home-comin'."

"But he might never come," objected Ella Marie who, however, was growing interested.

"Oh, of course! But he most always *did*. And I knew a girl whose father worked in the custom house, and one noon when he was goin' home to eat his dinner, a brick fell on his head an' killed him instanter. To be sure, we used to worry, some, about our men when they was gone. But, lookin' back, now, I can see that it only give us a better relish for gettin' them home again. And I wouldn't for anything have missed those days when we'd hear that *our* ship'd been sighted, and such a flutter as there'd be—rushin' to the pantry

to take stock, and makin' things spick an' span, and gettin' ourselves to the wharf to see 'em come in. And then the sitting around, and hearing all about it, and the giving out of presents. I always feel sorry for those that haven't anything like that to look back to."

"And who've you got, now, on your ship that's coming in?" Ella Marie asked.

Greatgrandmother sighed. "That's it," she said, "when you're eighty-three you don't have anybody much on 'em, like you used to do—the ones you used to look for are gone where 'there shall be no more sea'; you can't look for 'em to come to you any more, but you look for'ard to goin' to them. The ships, though—there are always ships—"

"*Real* ships?"

"Well, depends on how real you make 'em."

"But you mean p'tend ships."

"Do I?"

"Don't you?"

Greatgrandmother laughed.

"Tell you *what*," she explained; "when folks are as old as you or as young as me, they can't hardly tell p'tend ships from real ones. . It's all in what you mean by *real*. The *Gloriana* brought me many things that made me very glad. There isn't any *Gloriana* any more; but if there was, she couldn't bring the things my ship is bringing *now*—maybe because she's be too real —maybe because she wouldn't be real enough."

"Aren't they real things—now?"

"Well, of course they're real to me; but you wouldn't know what to do with 'em if they was to happen to get to you by mistake."

"Wouldn't I?"

Greatgrandmother almost giggled.

"Lan' sakes, no!" she cried. "I tell you what let's do: let's play load ship."

"I don't know how," confessed Ella Marie; but it was obvious that she was eager to learn.

"Why, you just pretend that you have a ship—that you own, and can send anywhere you choose, and tell the captain to get you whatever you want in all the world. I think it's nice to have your ship *named*; mine's always called the *Gloriana*—I never change her name."

"I think," said Ella Marie, after due deliberation, "that mine's called the—the *Nancy Lee*."

"That's fine! Now what do you want her to bring you?"

"A Shetland pony,—the littlest Shetland pony—*black*—and a weensy pony cart—"

"Yes; and—?"

"And a white Angora mother-cat, with four little white kittencats, with blue eyes and fluffy tails— "

"Yes; and—?"

"And a dog named Shep—a good, kind dog, what won't let anybody hurt you— "

"And—?"

"And a little white lamb,—a real one; and a tame monkey; and a parrot—I've *got* a canary!—and some pink kid slippers and blue kid slippers—*pale* blue —and some blue stockings and pink stockings; and a pink and a blue sash —and a lot of hair ribbons—and a little gold bracelet with a padlock on it and a teensy-weensy key, and a ring with a turquoise in, and a locket and chain, and a tricycle, and a whole bunch o' bananas, and a lot of candy—but I wouldn't eat it all at once—and a baby

sister, and a doll-house with stairs inside, and little furniture, and a new doll-buggy for my baby-doll, and about a hundred story-books — all the Alcott books and some others—"

"I hope the *Nancy Lee's* a good, big ship," laughed Greatgrandmother. "And, dearie me! where *are* you going to put all these things when you get them?"

"I guess she'll have to bring me nails and boards, to build a new house," Ella Marie answered, delighted with the game. "And some new furniture for it, and a horse and buggy for Mamma to drive, and a stable to keep them in, and a—and a new job for Papa, so he can pay all the bills!"

"Now it's *my* turn," declared Great-grandmother; "and I hope the *Gloriana*, if she comes sailing in to-day, will bring me something that'll limber up my

poor old joints a bit, so my body isn't such a *lot* older than my other feelin's. And I hope she'll bring me something else that'll keep me from waking up at four, every blessed mornin' and *stay-in'* awake. And I hope—"

Ella Marie's eyes were dancing. "What a funny ship yours is!" she cried. "I think mine's lots nicer."

"*I* don't!" protested Greatgrandmother, laughingly. "At least, not for me. What would *I* do with a Shetland pony, and pink kid slippers, and a doll-house with stairs inside?"

"And what would *I* do with your *limber*-medicine?" squealed Ella Marie, jumping up and down in glee. "Wouldn't it be awful if our ships *got mixed?* If you got mine, and I got yours!"

Greatgrandmother made the most of what her consternation would be were

the *Nancy Lee* to come sailing home to her, and Ella Marie laughed till she cried, fancying the *Gloriana* unloading for *her* benefit.

It was a delightful game; and afterwards Greatgrandmother told her some lovely stories, and they got to be the best of friends. But, just when Greatgrandmother was flattering herself that she was pretty good company for a child of ten, the child grew suddenly wistful.

"I forgot the most important thing for *Nancy Lee* to bring me," she said.

"You *did?* What is it?"

"Somebody to play with," answered Ella Marie.

Nannie's desire that many of the most precious things might not come to Ella Marie until she had been very wistful for them, was fulfilled in the matter of youthful companionship; none that attracted Ella Marie presented itself, for what seemed to her a very long time.

Meanwhile, another of her mother's desires for her was realized in the effect on Ella Marie of the old house and its dream-evoking treasures. With Great-

grandmother's stories, and Aunt Una's stories, to give her the initial stimulus, she soon learned to create for herself a much richer kind of story than she had ever "made up" before. But, the more she listened to the tales of her elders, the less was her inclination to offer them in return any of *her* stories. She felt that she perfectly understood them and all that they told her; but it was her impression that by no means could she make herself and her imaginings comprehensible to them. They were very, very kind, and they were wonderfully entertaining—there could be no question as to that!—but they were looking at life from one end of it, and Ella Marie was looking at it from another. That wasn't quite the way she explained it to herself. But it was what she felt. Whenever one of her fancies grew too beautiful to be longer kept

for her own delectation only, and she was tormented with the second desire of the creator, the desire to test the appealingness of his creation, she remembered Greatgrandmother's *Gloriana* with its cargo of ointment for the creaking joints of Age. How could she tell the *Gloriana's* owner about the mad, mad cruises of that rakish craft the *Nancy Lee?*

Nor, she felt, was there among the youngsters she had met here in Gloucester, one with whom she would care to go very far in the exchange of confidences.

"Seems to me," said Greatgrandmother, discussing the matter with Aunt Una, " that there are plenty of nice children for her to play with—those that live here, and all the summer visitors. She ought to be able to find *someone* she likes!"

"There are always plenty of nice

people," Aunt Una replied, "but the ones that could be happy together don't always find each other, or they don't learn how to discover their companionableness to each other. There are lots of folks who're not very demanding—'most any kind of a human being's company for them. Sometimes I envy them; but usually, I don't; because, while 'most any kind of a human being *might* be good company, not many of them *are?* They waste so much of life on things of no account. I sympathize with Ella Marie. She's got some idea of what's worth while to her, and she's holding out for it—I respect her!"

No one would ever have selected him to fill Ella Marie's needs, and no one would ever have suspected that he would tolerate her; but they found each other.

He was "going on fourteen," and big for his age—sturdy of build and temper. His hair was the chestnut brown that is one remove from auburn, and he had very large eyes of a tawny color more common among dogs than among humans. He was so freckled that the boys in school called him " Rain-in-the-face," and so taciturn—at times—that when they passed him they would grunt and say, " Heap big grouch."

One of the first things to embitter life for him was his name: it was Clarence, and he loathed it. As soon as he could, he licked every fellow that called him by it. At the time he met Ella Marie no fellow under sixteen " dast to call " him anything but Buck. And as not many fellows over sixteen condescended to call him at all, he was Buck Masters to most of his world.

There were other things that had em-

bittered life for Buck. Some of them he knew about, and some he only felt but could not analyze. One of these latter was a sort of truculence of manner, wherewith Buck sought to hide from the world the fact that he was not a truculent person at all. The less bellicose he felt, the more belligerent was his behavior. Something—perhaps it was being called Clarence, perhaps it was other parental mistakes—had developed in him very early in life a defensive attitude which easily became offensive. He was so ready for war, all the time, that he was liable to declare it on the slightest pretext. And yet, beneath or behind all this truculence lay the real desire of Buck's soul, which was the desire for worship—not to *be* worshipped! he would have scorned that as he scorned "Clarence"; but to worship, to have a hero, to pour out upon some superb

god the boundless devotion of which he felt himself capable. To feel that you were designed, and dowered, for the kind of devotion which had made others food for endless story-books, and not to be able to find a hero on whom you can demonstrate, is cause for bitterness indeed. Buck had this cause, and others.

One of the others was giving him great unhappiness on the morning when Ella Marie came into his life. A young man who taught in the Gloucester High School (where Buck had just finished his freshman year) had organized a small party of High School boys to go camping in the Maine woods. The party was to strike into the wilderness, and blaze trails, and hunt, and fish, and live by their own efforts as much as possible.

Buck had been invited to go, but

couldn't accept because of the expense; and he was "sore"—terribly sore! No; he wasn't sore on his father, exactly; he knew that his father worked hard and had a severe struggle to support five children. But he was sore on the general management of the world. For here was he, of prowess almost undisputed, left in Gloucester to rage and fret the long summer through, while one of the boys who had gone was that silly little Earl Peters; his parents had coaxed him to go and had outfitted him with everything conceivable in the way of rod and gun and camp equipment; yet Buck knew that Earl was terrified of bears and would far rather have stayed at home and gone to picnics. There was certainly a lot of mismanagement in the universe.

Cheated of the pastime of killing bears—in which he felt that he would

have excelled—Buck found himself sour on all the ordinary sports of summer vacation. These things no longer interested him—perhaps because his most particular cronies had gone to the Maine woods. So he addressed himself to the business of earning some money, to the end that he might, in another summer, camp where the bears were plenty.

It was in the pursuit of gold, for these ends, that he met Ella Marie. She was just through with her task of coffee-pouring, one morning, when Juliza stuck her head in at the "slide" (as they called the little window through which food was passed from the pantry to the dining-room) and asked:

"Want any clams, Miss Parton?"

"Clams?" said Aunt Una. "Who wants to know?"

"A boy at the back door; says he just dug 'em."

"Well, I don't know," answered Aunt Una. "I'll go and see."

Ella Marie went, too.

"Why, I declare! How do you do?" cried Aunt Una, when she saw Buck. "I didn't know you'd gone in business."

Her tone was so free from patronage of any sort that Buck forgot to be defensive.

"I've just begun," he admitted.

Aunt Una examined the clams critically—thereby still further commending herself to Buck—and bought them.

"I'll take the lot," she said. "Whenever I see a good mess of clams I put up a bit of juice for broth in winter; Mother's so fond of it."

"I can get you some more, to-morrow," Buck suggested. "I'm going in the business, this summer, if there's enough in it."

"Do you ever," spoke up Ella Marie,

" find anything that—that ain't clams? I mean, anything like—well, like a chambered nautilus or a sea-anemone? "

" Well, I haven't *yet*," answered Buck, whose experience was limited to one morning, though his manner was far from betraying that fact. " But I'm li'ble to."

"If you do, will you save it for me?" begged Ella Marie, eagerly. She was bent upon a "what-not" of her own, at home, with denizens of the deep upon its several shelves.

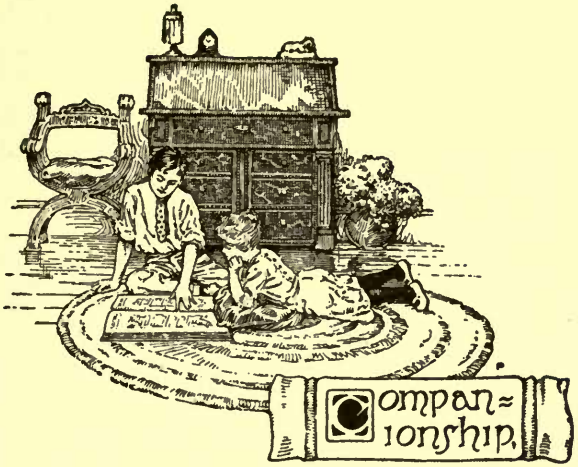
"Sure," he agreed, handsomely.

"This is Buck Masters, Ella Marie," said Aunt Una. "His mother used to play with your mother when they were both little girls. Maybe if you took Buck into the sitting-room and showed him some of your Grandmother's collection, he'd get a better idea what you want."

Buck went. His manner was condescending, but Ella Marie did not seem to mind. Perhaps she had some way of knowing that "inside of him" he was not feeling condescending at all, but was very, very shy, and very fearful that this little girl would find it out.

Greatgrandmother, who had not yet left the dining-room, consented to go thence into the garden, so that Ella Marie might, without self-consciousness, discourse upon the treasures of the what-not.

Buck's interest, however, leaped quickly from the what-not to the *scrutoir.* He had seen what-nots before, and fan-shaped coral, but he had never before seen the like of that desk. And this girl was a nice little thing. What a lot she knew about daggers and poisons and pirates! A fellow could talk to a girl like that! She'd understand.



Buck's business languished—not all at once, but gradually. If a companionship is very satisfying it is likely to be very absorbing; associations that one can dominate or surrender to at will, are not very vital. The friendships by which we grow, which really mean anything in our lives, are those to which we give pretty much everything that we have; unless they require that much, they don't seem to serve us greatly.

Buck never quite abandoned his manner toward Ella Marie, and she never swerved from her first comfortable assurance as to just what it revealed and what it sought to hide. Practically everybody else in his world, not excepting his mother, found Buck "difficult." Ella Marie found him the easiest person to get on with that she had ever met.

She did not know to what straits he was brought by his fondness for her society and his fierce determination not to let anyone suspect it. She never guessed how full of ingenious explanations and devious evasions was the "double life" Buck lived on her account.

Nothing, however, could be less accusing than the manner of Aunt Una or that of Greatgrandmother; they had agreed that the children should not be made self-conscious if they could prevent it. So, what with that and with the safe

screen from observation that the Parton house and garden provided, Buck and Ella Marie passed there a great deal of their time together.

Not once, in many days, had Ella Marie thought of her untimely end. But, as August wore on and the letters from abroad began to speak of homecoming, Ella Marie was frequently made very sad by another thought: the impending separation from Buck.

Of course she wanted to see her parents; but every joyful anticipation of their return was soon clouded with the reflection that in the very midst of welcoming them she would have to say goodbye to Buck.

While, as for Buck, he was being made so savage by the same prospect, that anybody on earth but Ella Marie would have been eager to escape from him.

The homeward-bound Rislers were due in Boston on a Tuesday, late in August. On the Saturday before, Buck and Ella Marie, each heavy of heart because next Saturday more than a thousand miles would separate them, were in the Parton sitting-room.

It was a very warm day. Great-grandmother was taking her after-dinner nap. Aunt Una was "doing up" peaches.

The house was many degrees cooler than out-of-doors, and gratefully dim.

Aunt Una had gathered up Ella Marie's short, fair curls and pinned them in a knot at the crown of her head. This made her look very grown-up, she thought, and she was trying to act accordingly. When Aunt Una had pinned the curls, she bent and kissed Ella Marie in the dear little place at the back of her neck which the curls usually hid.

Buck saw her do this, and blushed. He didn't know why he blushed, but he thought it was because he remembered how wicked he had been: he had wished that the ship Ella Marie's parents were on, would go down, "with all on board." Then Ella Marie would live with the Partons, always. When Buck got to reflecting on this, he realized that it was "the same as murder"—he had "wished them dead." He "took it back" very promptly, then — so promptly that he was hopeful no real damage had been done. But he blushed when he remembered it, and when he thought of Ella Marie's even knowing it, he "went white and cold," even on this perspiring day. There were many things about him—chiefly in his past, he hoped—that it would be dreadful for Ella Marie to know. And there were many things in his present feelings that

he felt no less constrained, though for different reasons, to keep sedulously concealed from her. It was a very disingenuous young person who talked with such apparent candor of dungeons deep and daggers sharp and pirates bold, yet was so constantly on guard lest dreadful secrets escape him. It must be fine, he thought, to be a dear little creature like Ella Marie, with nothing to conceal, no blustering "part" to play.

And Ella Marie, who played a different "part" every few minutes, like the most versatile of protean actresses, (but was less conscious of her "art" because each part seemed, more than all others, her "real self") was very patient with Buck's clumsiness at pretence.

"Let's get out th' atlas an' see where our ships're at," Ella Marie suggested. It was a favorite diversion.

Buck fetched the big atlas and spread it open on the sitting-room floor. Then he and Ella Marie sprawled on the floor beside it.

"Ooch!" said Ella Marie. "My elbows hurt."

Buck got her a pillow for them—and blushed. It made him so mad to blush, even though Ella Marie did not appear to notice it, that before he resumed his own sprawling, he kicked Greatgrandmother's footstool.

Ella Marie seemed to think this was mere clumsiness, and she laughed at it —laughed in the one way which a male creature can bear to be laughed at by the female who finds favor in his eyes; there was no sting in the laughter, but, rather, a kind of balm. It seemed to say: " You great, big Clumsy, you! What else could anyone expect from a man of your prowess, your bulk, your invincibility? "

Restored to good-humor by her admiring giggle, Buck took command of the situation.

"Look!" he cried. "Here's Borneo! The *Bully Buccaneer* 's at Borneo." The *Bully Buccaneer* was his ship.

"What's she getting you?" demanded Ella Marie, whose ideas of Borneo were hazy.

"Getting me a wild man—that's where they come from."

"Ooh! What you goin' to do with him?"

Thereupon Buck let loose his imagination.

"I don't like your ship at *all!*" Ella Marie declared.

"Ho!" he sniffed. "What'd I do with a silly ship like the *Nancy Lee*, all full of kid slippers and bracelets and pussy-cats? "

"An' what," she retorted, promptly,

" 'd *I* do with a nasty ship like the *Bully Buccaneer*, all full of wild men and buckin' bronchos and bloodhounds?"

"I guess you'd be pretty scairt if you saw my ship come in," he chuckled.

"I guess I *wouldn't* be, either!" she cried. But she was a conciliatory little person. "S'posin'," she went on, "s'posin' my *Nancy Lee* went down—!"

Buck felt that he was turning "white as anythin'." How could she know?

"—*went down*, with all on board—"

Buck clutched wildly, like a drowning man, for support.

"—an' none of it ever came ashore—except the *spars*—." Ella Marie was enjoying her shipwreck almost as much as she could have enjoyed a ship safe in port with all her treasures on it; and she was thrilled by Buck's evident anguish. "S'posin' there wasn't one tweenty-weenty thing saved—"

¡"Aw!" he snapped, so fiercely that he scared her, "what's the use of sayin' that?"

"I was on'y," she replied, with chill dignity, "I was on'y goin' t'ask you—" here the piteousness of that which she had evoked, brought a flood of tears—"t'ask you if there wouldn't be a single thing on your *Bu—bully Buc—ca—neer* that I—could play with!"

"Why, *sure* there would!" he cried. "You know *yourself* there would! Didn't you help choose most of 'em? You could have the mustang pony—I'd tame him for you—and the parrot that swears, and the—the—the Indian scout that'd always show where the sweet water was—and the—"

But she could not wait for him to finish.

"An' if the *Bully Buccaneer* went down," she declared, "an' the *Nancy*

Lee didn't, you could have my nice, kind dog—he'd be fierce when anyone was goin' to hurt you—and some o' my story books, and all the candy and bananas you want, and my—and my gun—"

"You didn't have no gun!" protested Buck, excitedly.

"I did too! I got it th' other day—when you said I'd need it so I could go in the woods with you and shoot bears. You know you did!"

"I forgot," he admitted. "But it'd prob'ly be too small for me, an' your dog'd be too tame. I hope I don't have to get mine off no girl's ship."

Ella Marie was hurt.

"You better take care! she retorted. "You might have worse 'n that; you might have to get your presents off a ship like the *Gloriana* that's full of *creak* med'cine an' things to make you sleep!"

"I wouldn' take 'em," he asserted, stoutly.

"Maybe you'd have to," she insisted.

Buck was getting angry. No! not at Ella Marie nor at what she was saying, but at Fate, at the thing that was about to separate him from this enchanting little person. Not being analytic, Buck did not know the cause of the rage that burned within him. It did not seem to him that he could be so mad at Ella Marie. It must be the game.

"Aw!" he cried, "what's the use? There ain't none of 'em goin' to come in—it's all *pretend*—we're on'y playin'."

As if Ella Marie did not understand!

"I know we're on'y playin'," she answered, with dignity. "But it's one o' those things where the p'tend is *real*, too—not *all* real, but *some*—like fairy tales. They' ain't all made up out o' nothin'—they're made up, but they're

true, too—not *exackly* true, but—but—You ast anybody that knows, an' *see* if they ain't true!"

"I don't have to ask anybody," he said, matching her dignity with a very capable brand of his own; "I know what you mean—like Pilgrim's Progress—it wasn't a real pack or a real slough, but it's truer than *anythin'*—*I* know what you mean, all right! "

"I've heard lots of grown-ups say it: 'When my ship comes in,'" Ella Marie went on. " 'Tain't just a children's game."

"The grown-ups don't really *mean* anything when they say that," he objected. "It's just a kind of joke."

"How d' you *know* it is?" she demanded. "How d' you know they don't hope they got *somethin'* nice comin' to 'em from far away? Maybe they don't mean a ship *exackly*, but they

mean *somethin'* that they're hopin' for!"

"Maybe they do," he agreed.

"Let's play what we hope," she suggested. She was always thinking of new things to do.

"How?" he asked.

Ella Marie didn't know; she was "makin' it up" as she "went along."

"Like 'I love my Love with an A—because he's so Amusin'," she said; "But not *just* like that! Let's say: 'I hope, I hope for an A—a–an animal cracker'—but not for an animal cracker, of course."

This proved quite entertaining. When they reached N it was Ella Marie's turn.

"I hope, I hope for an N," she began, a little shyly, "I hope for a Nother summer in Gloucester—with Granny an' Aunt Una—an'—an' YOU, Buck!"

"That ain't an *N*, that's an A," Buck objected—covering his emotion thereby.

"Then I'll hope it for Next summer!" said Ella Marie, "sing-songing" her words happily, quite undismayed—and undeceived—by Buck's chilling reception of her "hope."

Buck had never, in all his life, wanted to do anything so much as he wanted to say: "I hope so, too." But it stuck in his throat. Perhaps that was what made his voice so husky as he went on with the game, saying:

"I hope, I hope for an O—for an ourang-outang!"

"Oh, Buck! You don't, either!" protested Ella Marie.

Ten Years Later

The next summer, Ella Marie's baby sister came, and that made Gloucester out of the question. And the summer after that brought the World's Fair, when everyone in Chicago stayed home and entertained visitors.

By that time, Ella Marie's intense eagerness to see Buck had waned—just as, if her parents had tarried two

years in Europe, she would have learned long ere the two years were over, to live her life without them and to long for them only in a very temperate way. Human nature desires to repeat the pleasantnesses it has known: there are few things we have read or heard or seen or tasted, with keen enjoyment, that we are not more or less wistful to know again. But not many of these longings are acute—especially while we are young, and the natural course of our desire is for the untried.

Ella Marie often thought of Buck, and occasionally she wrote to him. She had no one in Chicago with whom she played quite so happily as she had played with him; yet there was always the possibility that some new acquaintance would develop into a comradeship as delightful as his had been, or even more: so she did not pine for him, although she

had her disconsolate days when nothing seemed to please, and she couldn't help wishing that Buck lived in Chicago.

She asked him, in one of her letters if he was not coming to the Fair. But Buck replied, tardily, that he would "not be able to attend the Exposition, as I am going to work in June, when school is out." His father, he went on to say, had been ill for several months, with inflammatory rheumatism, and was not well yet. Probably Buck would not go to school any more, but would stay on in the office of the commission house, "if I can hold down the job." "That is," he concluded, "unless my ship comes home. If it does, I'm going to Harvard in two more years."

But it didn't come home; and Buck found that he was able to "hold down the job"—also, that it would be necessary for him to do so. Earl Peters was

going to Harvard, though—if his parents could induce him to!

Things were miserably "messed up" in this world, Buck felt. But he did not say much.

He thought of Ella Marie sometimes, and always with pleasure in the recollection. What a captivating little companion she had been! In his thoughts she was always ten; and as he passed his sixteenth birthday and tipped the butcher's scale at 130 pounds, he began to feel very far removed from Ella Marie. Of course, he knew that she also was growing older; but he could not imagine her twelve years old and ready—as she wrote him—for High School.

Meanwhile, though he was not much interested in his "job," and had still to reflect on the irony of Earl Peters's parents coaxing him to enter Harvard, life was not wholly without its pleasant

aspects for Buck. He had one grand passion: baseball; and enough minor passions to keep his days from being savorless.

Later, when he was about eighteen, he had an ambition to wreck feminine hearts, wholesale. But Buck was entirely without subtlety or finesse, and did not realize that while it is entirely possible to do a wholesale business in romance, it is necessary to be very, very expert in the matter of making each victim believe herself the only one you ever truly sought; you may parade all the others in a way, but you must do it deprecatingly—as if you wished the sillies had not hurled themselves at your feet. Ignorant of this, Buck paid, at one time, equal court to at least six girls all of whom knew one another as well as they knew him. He hoped to start a very conflagration of jealousy; but none of the girls took him seriously.

After that, he was rather sulky about all females for quite a while, and the one real solace of his life was "the doings on the diamond." The bitterness that was his portion became more than ever like gall and wormwood, about this time, by reason of the desperate falling-in-love of his chum, Rance Osgood, and the consequent ruination of Rance for any chumming uses. It would have been bad enough, in any case; but as it was, the girl for whom Rance had "gone booby," was the last girl in Gloucester for whom, in Buck's opinion, any fellow with a grain of sense should demean himself. And the girl, suspecting Buck of opinions leaning that way, had been able to make Rance see that his one-time Pythias was far from worthy of his companionship.

Buck was so disgusted with Rance Osgood's behavior that he registered

some rather awful vows as to what *he'd* do before he'd let a girl make such a fool of *him*.

Altogether, his disposition, about the time he cast his first vote, was not angelic. He was restless—restless—restless—full of desire to do something, but not at all sure what it was that he wanted to do.

Two more years dragged by—oh! they were not without their hours of pleasantness and their days of quasi-compromise with conditions that must, apparently, be endured; but they dragged, none the less, because they were without a big purpose. Lots of little purposes will keep us frittering along after a fashion; but it is the big, controlling purpose that gives zest to life. Nobody's unfortunate who has a goal he's straining to reach; and nobody's fortunate who hasn't one. Buck was not "focussed" yet, and he was miserable.

When Greatgrandmother was ninety-three, her ship came in and took her away—to where most of those she had loved and lost awhile were waiting. It was sunset and evening star, and one clear call for her, and there was no moaning at the bar when she put out to sea.

Ella Marie was there when the call came. Aunt Una had written to Nannie and asked if it would be possible for either Ella Marie or her to come.

"I am seventy," she wrote, "and I have never known the old house without Mother's presence. I can see that she is going away. I try to feel resigned—but it is going to be very, very lonely, sitting here and watching her slip away from me. Do you think you could come—either of you?"

As it happened, Nannie was loath to go away and leave Rob; he had not

been sleeping well and was in a " fagged " and nervous state due to some business strain. She felt that he needed her. But Ella Marie could go, and she did. She was not exactly eager about it, but she was willing.

Ella Marie was fortunate: she had a Grand Purpose. Going to stay with Aunt Una during Greatgrandmother's last days, was not serving the Grand Purpose, but it was not clouding her vision of it, nor, necessarily, delaying her realization. So Ella Marie went, happily enough.

Her Grand Purpose was to be a singer. Not just " to sing," mind you, but to " be a singer," a great singer—operatic, of course, since that seemed the way, in part at least, of the greatest singers. She had been studying for three years, and everybody said she had a future. Having a future is so much more de-

lightful than having any kind of a present that it is almost a pity to change from one tense into the other. But of course nobody believes that until after the change has been made. There wasn't a prima donna living who had half so glorious a time as Ella Marie was always seeing herself about to have. But probably there wasn't one who would have exchanged with her if she could—gold for visions, fame for youth, power for hope. It is curiously, comfortingly true that, whatever our idle fancies may be, most of us are content to *go on.*

Greatgrandmother was content to go on. She had not the slightest wish, as she looked at Ella Marie, to be twenty again and bound for Naples in the *Gloriana;* much less to be twenty and facing a Grand Career on the operatic stage. She had loved life, and found it very good; but she was well content

to be going on. Indeed, she was more than that; she had a sense of this whereinto she was now passing as The Great Adventure, as well as the perfect Homecoming. She was ninety-three, and she had a long retrospect; but her vision was on the way ahead.

Ella Marie was at an age when we are, perhaps, less sensitive to things outside our own selves and purposes than at any other time; but she was not unaware of the state of Greatgrandmother's feelings in those last days, nor of the struggle Aunt Una was having, to keep her horror of aloneness from shading her mother's serenity of soul.

"It's like when you were first here," she said to Ella Marie, "and were trying so hard—how well I remember! —not to let your mother suspect how you dreaded to have her go."

It was while that hush of waiting enwrapped the house, that Buck made his first call on Ella Marie. He hated it like the deuce. Not that he was altogether without willingness to see Ella Marie—although there was a certain self-conscious awkwardness about that, which he dreaded—but he had perhaps even a little more than the average big, healthy young male creature's aversion from death.

It was a Saturday afternoon when he

called, scarcely less warm and golden than the long-ago Saturday when he and Ella Marie had played "I hope, I hope with an A." Everything in the world outside that house which was his destination was intensely alive, with the animation of nature in June, when she is so superabundantly vigorous and young. There is still a delicacy about her in May—one has occasional qualms for her forth-puttings, lest some adversity be too much for their untried endurance. But in June, one no longer fears for the new life in the world; it seems to have established itself; more, it seems to fill the universe. One scarcely thinks, yet, of parturition, much less of decline and death; August's full shocks of yellow grain seem almost as remote as the requiem of November's winds and the pall of December's snows.

Buck was three-and-twenty, past, and

passionately eager to believe in life, to find it generous and good. His ability to analyze his feelings, and to express them, did not noticeably transcend what it had been ten years ago. Nor had he, in those years, learned anything considerable about squaring himself with his world. He was still young enough to be waiting, none too patiently, for the world to take due cognizance of him. Yet, he was getting on. Witness, this call. Every instinct of his vigorous youth made him dread this house where Death was hovering. But something in him, which was not "convention" nor any other concession to appearances or opinion, made him feel that he ought to come; that there were things in the world which must outweigh his horror of the shadows; and that to dodge those things would be to become a skulking coward. Buck had made a similar

decision some seven or eight years ago, when he took home from an evening party a girl whose way lay past a graveyard. He ran all the way back, after leaving her at her gate, and his heart was in his mouth. But it was an important night for him. And this afternoon he was showing that unwillingness to skulk from a horror was still part of his spiritual equipment.

Ella Marie opened the door for him, and he was rather taken aback. He had imagined himself sitting, in the parlor, perhaps, awaiting her and wondering what he should say in greeting. It was disconcerting to confront her before he had quite decided what to say. And he had not counted on Ella Marie's readiness to begin without assistance from him.

"Why!" she cried, delightedly, "I believe you're Buck. How do you do? I'm ever so glad to see you."

She led the way into the sitting-room. The shutters were closed, but the room was not dark—only gratefully dim, and cool. Nothing was changed. The sea-treasures on the what-not; the old *scrutoir;* the book-case with the many volumes of voyages and other travels, and the atlas and the books on navigation and on the stars; Vesuvius still smoking; the Muses still dancing around Virgil's tomb; the strange, great galleons still riding at anchor in Naples' matchless Bay. Greatgrandmother's chair in the south window was vacant, as when she took her naps, but the room was very full, as always, of her presence —there was nothing to suggest that she lay upstairs waiting for the tide to ebb and bear her out to sea.

"How familiar it all looks!" Buck remarked. "Did you *ever* get your sea-urchin?"

She laughed. "No. And I hadn't thought of one in years, till I came back here. Do you remember how we used to love playing in here? And oh! do you remember about the wild man from Borneo? I don't suppose you ever got *him?*"

"No, I never did. The *Bully Buccaneer* hasn't been sighted for a long time."

"Nor the *Nancy Lee.* Wouldn't it be awful if they should come in?"

"Me with my wild man and my bucking bronchos and my ourang-outang, and my fine young arsenal—"

"And me with my doll house with stairs inside, and my sashes and pink kid slippers!"

They were delighted with these recollections of their youthful selves. How very, very young they had once been!

"I don't suppose you ever think—of ships coming in, and things like that,

any more," Ella Marie said, in her most casual tone. In order to renew acquaintance with Buck it was necessary to know as soon as possible where he stood with regard to certain things.

Buck wished he knew what he ought to say, but her tone gave him no clue. Suppose he admitted to her that he still indulged in day-dreams, and she laughed at him! If he must take a chance, it were better to err the other way. So he smiled his most business-burdened and cynical smile.

"When I think, now, of ships coming in, I think of how many tons of cod or haddock or mackerel they've got, and things like that," he answered, with the tone of a man who has long since ceased to cherish any fancies.

Ella Marie was disappointed.

"Do you?" she said. "It doesn't sound like much—much fun."

"It isn't," he confessed. "I loathe it!"

Her face brightened. A man who *liked* to think about tons of cod and mackerel would have been impossible to her as a companion. Indeed, a man who was at all contented with his job would have been difficult for her to make friends with, then—not that she esteemed contentment less, but that she loved adventure more.

"Why do you do it?" she cried, earnestly.

"There isn't much choice around here," he replied; "and I have to do *something*."

"Of course you have to do something; but you don't have to do it right here, do you? The world's so big and wide and wonderful—it must be *full* of things you'd love to do. Don't you ever feel that way?"

Buck looked at her and wanted to hug her—not because she was a girl, and twenty, and sweet; he was only waking to consciousness of that; but because she was, evidently, a kindred spirit, a fellow-creature to whom he could unburden his heart.

"Feel that way?" he echoed. "Why, that's the only way I *do* feel. All the rest of me is—is nothing—with*out* feeling. Nobody knows how I hate *fish.* I don't believe anybody ever hated 'em like I do. I—I told you a kind of a—*a story* when I said I never think of the *Bully Buccaneer*—"

"You didn't say you never thought of her," she objected, helpfully.

"Well, when I tried to make you think I didn't. I was thinking of her only this morning as I sat down there in my office, reeking with the smell of fish. It's the kind of a day when you can't

help feeling how beautiful the world is, and wishing you could get out into it, and see it all, and never, never smell dead, drying fish any more as long as you live. If the *Bully Buccaneer* could come in, now, I wouldn't care if she had lost my wild man overboard, and my bucking broncho had died of the pip. All I'd ask 'd be if she'd just spread her sails and take me about 12,500 miles from here."

"12,500 miles! Where to?"

"I don't care. That's half 'round the world, isn't it? If I went any further I'd be on my way home, I suppose."

Ella Marie laughed.

"Well, I don't want the *Nancy Lee* to take me as far as *that*," she declared. "I want to go to Paris and to Italy. I want to go to Naples and Rome, and to Milan—to *La Scala*—and to Paris—

to the *Opéra Comique* and to the *Grand Opéra*. I want her to come sailing in and bring me money for lessons and for travel, and to take me away—away—over the seas to where everybody loves art and song and all kinds of beauty, and your heart gets so full of the joy and loveliness of life that you couldn't keep from singing if you *wanted* to!"

Her voice, vibrant with eagerness, her face, alight with vision, thrilled Buck through and through.

"I don't know exactly what it is I want to do," he said, "or where I want to do it. But I want to *be* somebody, and *do* something, and I want to get far, far away from here—from fish, and from the people who think they've got to keep on treating you like a kid because they happened to know you when you were one. I'll tell you *what*, Ella Marie: this New England atmosphere

just about drives me to drink. I believe—honestly, I do!—that if I had to stay here, I'd be a drunkard—I'd *have* to. Of all the petty, narrowminded people! They don't know anything, or *want* to know anything, except how wastefully the minister's wife peels her potatoes and how late the lawyer's son stayed at the gate with the doctor's daughter last night. I want to get out into a world of people with real, red blood in 'em, and some interests besides gossip—and *fish!*"

Just then, Aunt Una came downstairs and into the sitting-room.

"I think I see a change in Mother," she said. "I knew you were here, Buck, and I thought you'd go for the doctor—"

"Why, of course!" he answered. "Dr. Semple, I suppose?" and an instant later he was gone.

Buck came back with the doctor. He did not want to be there, partly for fear of intruding and partly because he dreaded a harrowing scene; but it did not seem just right not to go back and offer his services, although he hoped they would be declined.

Ella Marie came to the door again, in answer to his ring, and she was crying.

When Buck saw her tears, he wanted to flee, and yet—more than he wanted

to flee, he wanted to be of any comfort to her that he could.

"Shall I—come in—or go away?" he whispered to her.

Ella Marie laid her hand appealingly on his arm.

"Come in, please," she said.

And Buck would have gone had it been a fiery furnace into which she bid him.

The doctor went upstairs.

"Is there anything else I can do?" Buck asked.

She shook her head.

"Not now—that I know of—thank you. Gramma seems to be slipping away quite fast. I—I feel so strange, Buck—so full of awe. I've never been so near it, before. It's such a great, great mystery. I—I like to know you're here. Wait, while I go and see what the doctor says."

He watched her as she went up the stairs. How sweet she was! How appealing! Then he went into the sitting-room, to wait. He has "never been so near to it, before" either.

He stared at the what-not with its treasures of the deep; at the *scrutoir* full of curios; at the old books Great-grandmother had loved so long and well; at the Bay of Naples wall-paper which her father had brought from overseas when she was a little girl of twelve. She had never known any home but this; for she was the only one of the Andrews children to survive infancy, and her parents could not bear to have her go to a house of her own when she married. Here, where she had come into life, she was going out of it—after ninety-three years. Here she had been courted and wedded, and here her children had come into the world, and hence

two of them, and her husband, had passed to the world unseen.

How she loved this house, these things of precious memories! Buck wondered if she was loath to leave them. The sunshine, piercing the joints of the closed blinds, lay in spots of brightness on the floor and reflected, here and there, from mahogany or glass surfaces. Was she conscious of going away from it all, from the June-full earth, from the dear home, from her treasures and from those who loved her?

After a while—a long while—the doctor came down stairs, and went out. Then, in a little while, Ella Marie came. Her face wore a look Buck would never forget—the look of one who has been very near to a great mystery.

"She has gone," Ella Marie said. "She was—oh, Buck! I can't tell you how awesome it was: she was here one

moment, and the next, she was gone—gone so far away—beyond recall. She seemed kind of sleeping, when I went up; then, by and by, she was more awake. She said things, but not to us—I couldn't make them out. Suddenly, there came such a look in her face! I can't describe it. And she cried 'Thaniel!' quite clear, and very joyfully—and died with the glad look on her face. 'Thaniel' was what she called Greatgrandfather."

Ella Marie was trembling violently; she was spent with emotion.

Buck forgot the years in which they had been as strangers; he forgot that he was a young man and she a young woman, now; he forgot everything but that she was a dear comrade and that she was turning to him for the comfort of his understanding. He took her in his arms and held her close; and she wept, with her face against his breast.

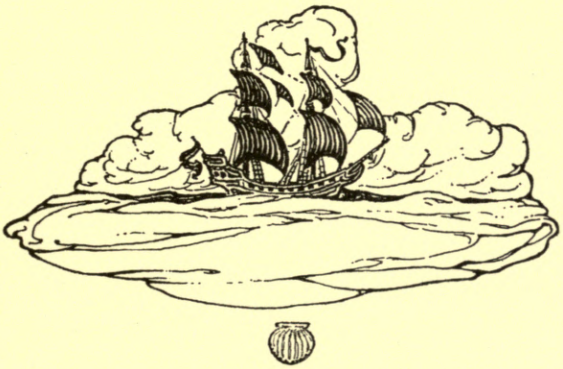
"Aunt Una's with her," she went on, when she could. "She said she wanted to be with her—alone; so I came away. It has been a great comfort to have you here."

She was very sweet, in her gratefulness, and not at all self-conscious. Fresh from the presence of the so-great mystery, she was not thinking of Buck as a young man. He was a tender and companionable human; and he was young and big and strong and *very much alive.*

But Buck, who had opened his arms to her boyishly, had become a man when he felt her in them. Then, suddenly, he wanted to flee. Something in him was stifling him; he must get away; he must get where he could breathe, and think, and try to understand.

"I'm—glad I could—be here," he murmured. "Let me know if there's anything I can do."

He knew he was abrupt; he knew that she felt him to be so. But he could not tarry. He had but one desire: to go far, far away, where no one could see him or speak to him; and sit down and think, and think, and think.



During the next few days, Buck's desire to be where Ella Marie was, to see her and hear her speak, was equalled only by his desire *not* to be alone with her. He did not know just what it was that he was afraid of, but he felt that before he ventured on any more intimate conversation with Ella Marie he would better know what it was, and what he should do about it.

He was very helpful to the two women, in the hundred-and-one things that re-

quire attention at such times; and the thought of being able to serve Ella Marie thrilled him sweetly. Yet he suffered a quite acute terror lest she unloose upon him a flood of gratefulness like that she had dumbly expressed on the day Greatgrandmother died.

But as Ella Marie showed not the slightest inclination to do anything of the sort, his fear gradually faded.

Greatgrandmother's will left the old house and all else that she owned, to Aunt Una "who shares my wish that, after her, the home shall belong to Nancy Risler and, in due course, to Ella Marie Risler, my greatgranddaughter."

And Aunt Una told Ella Marie how much she and Greatgrandmother had discussed what was to become of the old home, and how they had hoped that it might stay on in the possession of those who loved it.

She did not tell Ella Marie how, ten years ago when two children were playing with the cherished souvenirs around which three other generations of children had built their fancies and fashioned their dreams, two old women were entertaining sweet hopes that some day the children of these two might in their turn pore over the old books of voyagings and picture for themselves the world underseas whence came the treasures of the what-not.

For Aunt Una realized that, at twenty, one is far less eager to conserve what one's elders have cherished than to adventure in spheres of which, one thinks, they never dreamed. Ella Marie would love the old home some day, Aunt Una felt sure. But she was too wise to try to hasten the day; for she knew such things must take their own course.

She could have told Buck a great many things, if he had asked her; but he didn't ask.

When he had ceased to be fearful in Ella Marie's presence, they were often together. They went for long walks, Saturday afternoons and Sundays; and they spent many evenings tête-à-tête, after Aunt Una had retired.

It was on one of their walks that Buck was able at last to free his mind of that which had been tormenting him since the June day Greatgrandmother died.

He and Ella Marie had wandered away from the ordinary paths of holiday-makers and summer visitors, and found a corner in a little cove where they could feel withdrawn from the world of men.

The sea was very blue, and white-sailed pleasure-craft fluttered hither and yon on it, like flocks of white butterflies.

"Think," said Ella Marie, "of a multitude of sails all russet and yellow and crimson—no two alike, Mother says. And the sea and sky so blue! She says it isn't just poets' fancy—the Mediterranean being bluer than other seas. It *is* bluer! And she's told me about the Blue Grotto at Capri, where it's like being in the heart of a sapphire. Think of sitting on a shore where history and poetry and romance and art have been made for nearly three thousand years. Think of Cumæ, and of Pæstum! of Capri and Ischia! Of Vesuvius and Pompeii! of Amalfi and Ravello! Mother says that everybody sings—the street-venders, the goat-herds, the children, the fishermen—everybody! Life is so full of loveliness it overflows in song."

Her voice was vibrant with emotion.

"Would you," he began—then changed his question to an assertion: "You

would be very—miserable, if you couldn't look forward to—to seeing all that, and to study, and a—a career."

"Yes," she said, "I would; I believe I'd die—or, anyway, I wouldn't care to live."

"You don't think there's any other —any other kind of a—a *ship* that could bring you happiness?"

"I don't know what you mean," she answered. But perhaps she could have guessed.

"I mean—well, not anything in particular. But if there's only one thing a person wants to do in life, and he doesn't manage to do it, it's pretty tough, I should think. I wonder if many people are like that and how they feel if they realize that they're never going to do the one thing they care to do. I don't mean you, of course. You'll do it, I should say. But there must be

others who don't do it. We don't know much about the people all around us—do we? I wonder if most of them once wanted to do something, to be something, to see something, very, very much; and if, by and by, they kind of got used to not doing it, or being it or seeing it, and learned to care about something else — that they *could* have! I look around our office, often, and wonder if the fellows who've been there for years, for a lifetime, hate it like I do, and wish for their *Bully Buccaneers* to come and take them 12,500 miles away — or if they've always liked it—or if they've *learned* to like it—or *what!* I used to have a chum—Rance Osgood—and he was crazy about the same things I was —or *am.* But he—fell in love, and last year he got married. And now you couldn't get wild horses strong enough to drag him away from that

two-by-four cottage of his, and his wife and—baby."

"Oh, lots of people are like that," Ella Marie declared. "They haven't any real ambition; they only think they have. And they're very easily diverted, and satisfied."

"Rance thinks *I* haven't any real ambition!" Buck admitted, laughing.

Ella Marie had drawn up her knees and clasped them with her hands, and just now her head was bent forward till it rested on her clasped knees, musingly. Buck could see the back of her neck, and suddenly he remembered that long-ago day when Aunt Una had pinned up Ella Marie's curls and kissed the "sweet spot" they usually hid—and Buck had blushed, and kicked over the footstool.

He blushed now; but Ella Marie did not see him.

"Don't you pay any attention to him,"

she said—meaning to Rance Osgood. "You *know* you'd never be satisfied just to stick here all your life, and smell drying fish, and never see anything! You'd *die!* Maybe not so dead they'd bury you; but so dead you'd wish they *would!* Don't you *know* you would?"

"Yes, mostly I do; but there are times when I think maybe I'm foolish."

These "times," he might have told her, but did not, had been coming to him since that minute when he held her in his arms and felt her cling to him. And the question they brought was: can there be anything in life more thrilling, more wonderful than *this?*

Then, the smell of drying fish would sicken him; his inner vision would show him stoop-shouldered office men hunching themselves endlessly over letters and ledgers full of dried fish and fish to be

dried—estimating and dickering and bargaining, forever and forever, that at each month's end there might be a pittance to pay rent and doctor's bills and buy coal and food and clothing.

Had they all sold themselves into that drear bondage for the right to hold a girl against their beating hearts and to kiss the nape of her white neck?

"You're just like the little boy you used to be," she chided, charmingly. "Don't you remember? We'd be playing 'When my ship comes in,' just as nice as nice could be; and all of a sudden you'd say 'Aw! there ain't goin' to *be* no ship—really!' And I'd have to get you started all over again—started believing."

" Yes," he admitted; " you did. And you always knew so much better than I did just what you wanted. I used to 'choose' things wildly, lots of times,

because I didn't really know what I did want. I don't know yet! That's what bothers me so: I wonder if I ever shall know, 'for sure'?"

"I should think you would," she answered. "I always know, and I always believe. I'll tell you what let's do: Let's agree to meet and tell each other if our ship has come in. It will take my *Nancy Lee* quite a while to bring the fame and fortune she has for me. I don't really expect her in much less than ten years. Maybe your *Buccaneer* 'll get in lots sooner. But, if we can, let's try to tell each other about them. That'll be something to look forward to."

"All right," he agreed. "It's a long 'look'—but there may be glimpses in between. Here's hoping!"

There *is* no other blue like the blue of the Mediterranean, especially in the Bay of Naples and its neighbor, Salerno Bay. Painters may lay on their cobalt and their ultramarine till sober folk who've never seen those waters lament the wild excesses of painters' fancy; yet over those same canvases the beholder whose memory's haunted by his own pictures of the tideless sea, will

shake his head, and murmur: "They don't get it! I suppose they *can't!*"

And so with the oft-pictured places around those blue, blue bays: seen thousands of miles from Naples, the pictures move one to the skeptical ejaculation "Aw! there *ain't* no sech a place!" But face to face with the reality, how timid the pictures seem, how inadequate!

Buck Masters was taking tea on the Bertolini terrace. It was five o'clock on an afternoon in early May, and Buck had been a sojourner in the Old World for about six hours, having landed that morning.

On the terrace were a number of his fellow-voyagers. They had all ordered tea, but although it was good tea it was getting scant appreciation. If it had been nectar from Olympus, how could it have diverted attention from the feast spread for the eyes? Everybody was

intensely excited—some, after the immemorial division, unto volubility, and some to speechlessness. Buck was speechless. And he didn't want to be talked to; he wanted to look, and think. This was evident to his fellow-passengers. For Buck, though he was "goin' on" thirty-four, was not noticeably more suave than when he was "goin' on" fourteen.

He was seeing, as he sat with his arms on the railing, and his chin resting on them, more—much more!—than the panorama outspread before him. He was seeing beyond Baia and Ischia, thousands of miles, in the track of the westering sun—to Gloucester, Massachusetts; and back, over a sea of years, to certain long-ago days when a little boy and a little girl played in the Parton sitting-room and "made up" endless stories about the Bay of Naples, and

what they desired that their ships might bring in.

And now, according to their pact, he was come to see what cargoes had come to her; and to tell her, if she cared to hear, what of the *Bully Buccaneer*.

She had been singing in opera, in Rome, until Lent began; then had filled a few concert engagements on the Riviera. And from Cannes she had written to Aunt Una: "When I'm through here, I'm going down to Naples. For, in all my years abroad, after all my longing, I have never seen Naples Bay."

Buck had meant to go over in the summer, but when he heard from Aunt Una about Ella Marie's visit to Naples, he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once.

No; he had not sent her word. She had told Aunt Una to write her, care of Cook, after April 12. Buck went to

Cook's as soon as he had settled himself in a hotel and dispatched a most delicious luncheon. He found that Ella Marie was living not far from his hotel, in a *pension* on Parco Margherita. But she was away on an all-day trip—to Capua, it was thought at the *pension*. They could not say if she would be back to dinner, or if she would dine at Caserta and return in the evening.

So Buck had taken the "lift" and gone up to Bertolini's where, Baedeker in hand, he had identified all the principal points of interest in that panorama which seems to pass in review ten thousand story-books and half the romance of the world.

He had not left his card for Ella Marie. He wanted to surprise her. It seemed to him that if he took her unawares he would be better able to guess just how glad she was to see him.

He had had "glimpses" of her in these ten years past, as he had hoped. Twice in that time she had been in Gloucester to visit Aunt Una; they were brief visits, but they had served to keep Ella Marie in touch with that corner of her world. The last one, though, was nearly four years ago. At that time Ella Marie had begun to feel that she was, after more than four years of foreign study, beginning to draw near to her goal. She had not been home since then. Her letters to Aunt Una—who financed this pursuit of fame and fortune—told of hard work and more hard work and then harder work; they told of a good many engagements, too; but it was not possible for Aunt Una to estimate what further lengths of toilsome way stretched between such engagements as Ella Marie had and such as she desired. Nor was Buck able to guess. Now

and then he read, in Boston or New York papers, that Miss So-and-So, an American girl, had made her début last night at Milan or Monte Carlo or at the Opéra Comique in Paris, and had "scored an instant success." But he had not yet heard anything of the sort about Ella Marie; and he had no idea how near to this, or how far from it, she was.

Perhaps the *Nancy Lee* was sighted, and coming into port with fame and fortune aboard. Perhaps Ella Marie would be too absorbed in her expectations to care that he had come four thousand miles to ask about them.

But this was Buck's Great Adventure, so long delayed; and he liked everything that enhanced its adventurousness. For he might never know another.

He lingered on the terrace until after

six, then went down in the "lift"—down through 250 feet of rock, like the shaft of a great mine—and stepped out on the Corso Vittorio Emanuele whence Naples, except for its very modern and semi-suburban parts, still lay far below him.

It was too early for dinner, and too late to go down into the city and get back by dinner-time. But he could go to Parco Margherita and see if Ella Marie had come back.

She had. She was just paying her cab-driver, and telling him something in Italian nearly as voluble as his own.

Buck watched her until she turned to go in, then stepped forward and greeted her.

For an instant she looked as if she thought her eyes, her ears, were playing her some strange trick. Then she cried:

"Buck!" and held out both her hands to him in a pretty gesture that was quite Latin and perhaps a bit operatic, but none the less sincere; even a New Englander like Buck, schooled to regard as most genuine those emotions which are unexpressed, felt the warmth and the charm of it.

Also, more unprepared than she for explanations, for all his weeks of planning what he would say, he gave instant thanks for that ease of manner in her which seemed to make all explanations unnecessary. There he was, and she was whole-heartedly glad to see him. If she wondered why he had come, Buck could not discover as much.

"You *nice* person!" she said, beaming up at him. "When did you come? And how long are you going to stay? And oh! could anything be more enchant-

ing? We're going to see the Bay of Naples at last—and together!"

"I've just come, to-day," he answered, "and I'm lonesomer than the deuce, and I'm stopping right near here, at Parker's, and 'I hope, I *hope*' you can dine with me!"

"You get your hope," she laughed, gaily. "Shall I dress—or just wash my face?"

"You needn't do either on my account," he protested. "I suppose there are places where we may eat without being togged out?"

"There are—heaps of them! In fact, there are no others, here—nor elsewhere in Italy, that I know of. It is difficult to be conspicuous here—no matter what you do!"

"Have you anything to suggest?" he asked.

She thought a moment.

"It depends," she said, "whether you

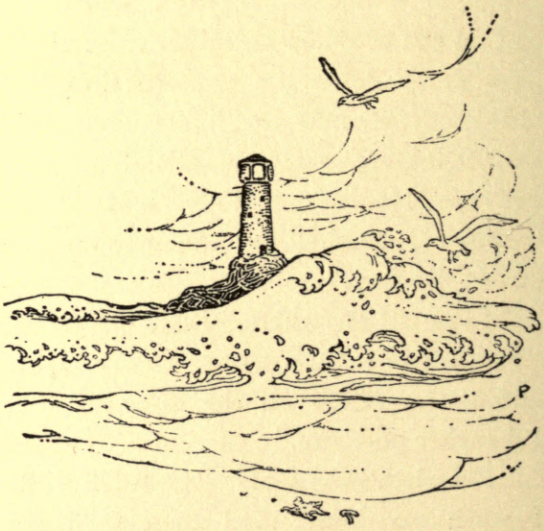
care most for a very good dinner or for a wonderful sight. If you want the dinner, you'll get it in your hotel. If you want the sight, and can 'make out' with a plain meal, quite Italian, I'll take you to a place high up under the shadow of San Martino, where we can sit out of doors and watch the afterglow creep down the western slopes of old Vesuvius, and the lights come out, like twinkling stars, in the dusk that enwraps Naples. And by and by, if we linger, we shall see the moonlight—on Naples Bay."

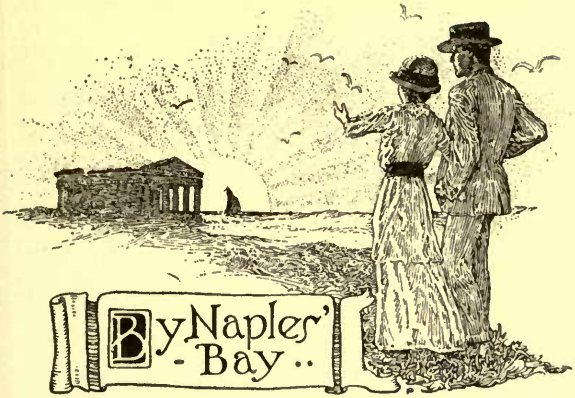
"I can eat anywhere," Buck answered; "but I can't hope to see many sights like that. If it's all the same to you, I'd rather go there."

"I'm glad," she said. "Come in while I wash my face. And then we'll get one of these Yankee Doodle cabs and drive to the *funicolare*."

"Why, 'Yankee Doodle'?" he asked.

"Haven't you observed that the horses all wear feathers in their caps? And they're all called Macaroni!"





There was so much to see, and so much to say! Yet they both avoided the purely personal. She talked about her work, in a general way, but not confidentially. He said nothing about his —there seemed nothing to say about dried fish. Ella Marie was loath to mention the *Bully Buccaneer*, because she knew that Buck was still in the business he had called a living death. Perhaps he was trying to forget it, for a brief while.

There could be no doubt about his happiness in the present—nor yet about her own. Italy is the land of enchantment, but it is possible to be very lonely in the midst of it all—lonelier far than in a land where there is less that one might enjoy if only the gods gave companionship.

Buck knew very little about Italy—it had not been part and parcel of the business of dried fish, as it had been of Ella Marie's business of song—but he followed where she led, and loved what she taught him, just as he had done years ago, in Gloucester.

She thought they ought, for old-times' sake, to make one of their first visits to the Aquarium where they could see living specimens of those deep-sea creatures which had so exercised their childish fancies.

Then they made the Vesuvius ascent;

they visited Herculaneum and Pompeii; they went to Camaldoli; they had a day of days at Posilipo, Puzzuoli, Baia, and Cumæ. It was unlocking the oldest story-books they knew, to stand on the shores of Avernus, the descent to which is so "easy"; and to go into the cave of the Cumæan Sibyl; to see where St. Paul landed on his way to Rome to appeal to Cæsar; and to look at last upon Virgil's tomb—where, however, the Muses were not dancing.

Ella Marie was a little uncertain what to propose about Amalfi and Ravello and Salerno and Pæstum. Even the furthest of them can be visited in a day trip from Naples; but this is fatiguing and unsatisfactory. She did not know how Buck would feel about the "proprieties" of a more leisurely trip. Perhaps they would better join a conducted party—although, for herself, she would

rather never see Pæstum than see it that way.

Finally, she told him her perplexities.

"What could we do?" he asked.

"Well, we could do *this:* we want to go to Capri. We can go there some morning, see the Blue Grotto, go about the island and I can take the boat for Sorrento at 4:30, or whenever it goes; you can stay in Capri all night, and come over to Sorrento in an early morning boat, and we can start betimes on the Amalfi drive. Then, I can stay up at the Cappucini Convento, and you can stay down in the town. We can drive up to Ravello early in the morning, and then you can go to Cava for that night and I can go to Salerno, where you can join me at nine the next morning for Pæstum."

He smiled, ruefully. "It seems like a lot of beating about, and a lot of waiting around alone—doesn't it?"

"It does," she admitted. "Perhaps we can find some one to take along, for the proprieties."

"We didn't have them to hamper us in the old days, when we used to visit all these places—did we?"

"No; that was the Garden of Eden."

"And what is this?"

"I don't know," she answered, gaily. "But it's a mighty good place to be, and if we're wise children we'll make the very best of it and not mind any little difficulties. It's the great Big Adventure we've always talked about. It's an old, old dream come true. Mercy me! I hope we're not so terribly mature that we want our adventuring to be without difficulties—all on feather-beds of ease."

"You shame me!" he declared, "You always do."

"How you must hate me!" she retorted, saucily.

"No," he said, simply; "I don't; I must like to be shamed!"

Not the least of Pæstum's charms is its comparative inaccessibility. True, this is not charming when one is on the way thither—for the way is not only long, but much of it is uninteresting, and the journey is arduous—but after one has got there it is a great satisfaction that few persons stay long enough in Naples and care enough about Greek temples to rise at 5:30 or thereabouts, catch a 7 o'clock train and arrive at Pæstum nearly four hours later. Even of those who visit Pompeii, go to Capri, and take the Amalfi drive, not any considerable number devote a day to Pæstum. All of which is as it should be, there being no place the hurrying sightseer could more tragically spoil for the true pilgrim. The ocean of stillness in which the temples stand is as awesome

as the great structures themselves. If one has the good fortune to have the place to himself, and the happy faculty of forgetting the custodian who sells entrance-tickets and picture-postcards, he may easily—once he is well within the big enclosure—imagine that in uncounted centuries no human foot has trodden these vast porticoes, or bruised the acanthus leaves growing close to the temple steps, or frightened the small snakes and lizards who sun themselves on these warm, golden stones or hide in these lush marsh grasses.

Buck and Ella Marie were exceeding fortunate; not another soul came nigh the temples while they were there.

The day was perfect; a soft breeze blowing from the sea a mile away, tempered the warmth of the brilliant sunshine. The sky, intensely blue as only a southern Italian sky can be, was

cloudless, and added thereby to the effect of illimitable space.

Not a sound! They could almost hear the beating of their own hearts. Not a sign that anyone had lived hereabouts since the Augustan era when, probably, these splendid temples began to be neglected. Nothing but this breath-taking majesty of stone, this forest of Ionic pillars like the boles of great trees, and overhead, the blue, blue sky.

Gone is nearly every trace of the stucco with which these rugged stones were once covered; gone, almost every vestige of sculpture, and of painting. Green growing things spring from the crannies in the entablature. Holes, like great cannon wounds, gape in the gold-brown travertine. Yet to no lover of beauty could it conceivably occur to wish that he might have seen this place two thousand,

twenty-five hundred, years ago, rather than now; whatever may have been its glory when it was in its prime, there can never—one feels sure—have been a sublimity in it and about it such as there now is. The mind of the beholder is unsaddened by any regrets, untroubled by any effort to remember—for what was the history of these temples no one of us has ever known. But the spirit that broods over the place is the spirit of infinite peace.

"If I live to be as old as these temples are," said Ella Marie, when she felt able to say anything at all, "I shall never be so fretted, so tired, so anxious, that the memory of this day will not come back to me with healing in its wings. I shall feel the softness of this sea breeze, and see this tesselation of cool shadows on the stone floors, and hear this vast soundlessness — until I

die; and, after that, I shall still have Pæstum in my soul, wherever my soul lives."

Buck made no reply. This place had laid hold on him and bound him as with a spell.

They wandered up and down in the temples and outside them. They located the old Greek highroad, inspected the ancient town wall, glanced at the remains of the Roman amphitheatre, and satisfied themselves as to where the Forum stood.

Then they went across the dusty road, outside the temple enclosure, and sat under a tree to eat their luncheon. Ella Marie had brought bread and a little jar of honey, cheese and cold chicken and a fiaschetta of the sweet wine of Orvieto.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, came company: a boy and a dog.

"Now," declared Buck, "I know I'm neither dreaming, nor gone to heaven. If this dog likes chicken bones, he's a real dog and I'm a real person and this's a real place."

He did like them. And the boy liked bread and honey.

"Ask him if he lives here," Buck said.

"He says he does," Ella Marie reported; "and he wants to know if the signor comes from America. He has heard it is a fine country, America, and he would like to go there."

"Ask him, please, if he has a *Bully Buccaneer*."

Buck was glad he could not understand Italian—it was so delightful to listen to the unintelligible words Ella Marie was speaking, and watch their effect on the boy's face. No need to wait for her translated reply! Here was a ship-owner, unmistakably!

They gave him all they could spare of their luncheon, wished him favoring winds for his ship, and took their way back across the road, and into the temple of Neptune.

"I wonder," mused Buck, "for what it was they worshipped him—this god of the briny deep. Was it because so much they cared about was in their ships, and they courted his mercy on them?"

"I don't know," she answered, dreamily. "Maybe so."

"Some day," Buck went on, thoughtfully, "that dago kid 'll get to America —perhaps—and dig gas-mains or subways, and live in a fetid tenement with cluttered fire-escapes for his only view, and his soul'll be sick for Italy—for one glimpse of this blue sky, one whiff of this breeze from the sea, one hour's siesta in the shade of a temple portico. Isn't life *queer?*"

She smiled; but the smile was tremulous—misty.

"Life is—queer," she assented, softly. "We haven't said anything about our ships, and very little about ourselves. But at Amalfi I heard you sniff the smell of the nets that were drying on the beach, and when you said, half under your breath and all to yourself: 'it smells like home!' I knew that you don't feel, now, as you once did—about dried fish."

"I don't," he admitted; "but I've been afraid to tell you. I'm afraid, now, to tell you what's on my *Bully Buccaneer*."

"Worse than a wild man from Borneo?"

He shook his head. "You may think so."

"How about that cruise to the place 12,500 miles from home?"

"I couldn't use it, now."

"No?"

"No; this cruise that I'm on now has got to last me quite a while. Because, when my ship comes home I hope to *own* that dried-fish business!"

He was watching her face intently. The expression on it as he made his confession, was full of tender understanding.

"I remember," she murmured, "what Gramma said: 'the cargoes change.'"

"Has the *Nancy Lee* changed hers, too?"

She nodded.

"No sashes and pussycats and pink slippers?"

"And no fame and fortune. I've spent eight years in the temples where fame is prayed for, and in the schools where she is sweated for. And I—I think that when she is won, it must be by those who care more for her than I do. She's

a jealous goddess, she brooks no rivals; she must have *all* of her devotee, or *none*. And, though I have not always known it, there must always have been other cargo on my *Nancy Lee*."

"So, now—? " he whispered.

"Now, I think her prow is homeward turned. Please, Neptune, send her sailing back to where—to where I first waited for her, and knew the *Gloriana* —and the *Bully Buccaneer*."

Buck could not trust himself to speak, for several minutes. The ground whereon he stood was so very, very holy that he feared to profane it by some clumsiness of faltering speech. His gaze was fixed far off, where bright-colored sails passed in the Tyrrhenian Sea; but he was seeing beyond those—seeing a Promised Land where a man went home, at night, from his work; and a woman was there to greet him; a woman who

made him, as he held her against his breast, feel that though life had been sweet to other men, to him above them all was it infinitely wonderful and precious.

"Was there," he said, presently, "was there anything on your *Nancy Lee* that —that you never told me about?"

"Yes," she murmured.

"Was it there *all* the time, no matter how the other cargo changed?"

"Yes," she said. "Was there—something like that on the *Bully Buccaneer?*"

"How can I say until you tell me what 'it' was?"

She smiled up at him, radiantly.

"The first time I sent my *Nancy Lee* a-sailing, I told Gramma 'the most important thing for her to bring me is —somebody to play with.'"

"And then—?"

"The dream of the Perfect Com-

rade never fades—does it? All cargoes change but that. It was the one thing that the *Gloriana* brought Gramma at the last. I never can forget her joyful cry: 'Thaniel!'"

He laid his head on her shoulder, to hide his happy tears. She bent and kissed him.

"My ship is home," he said.

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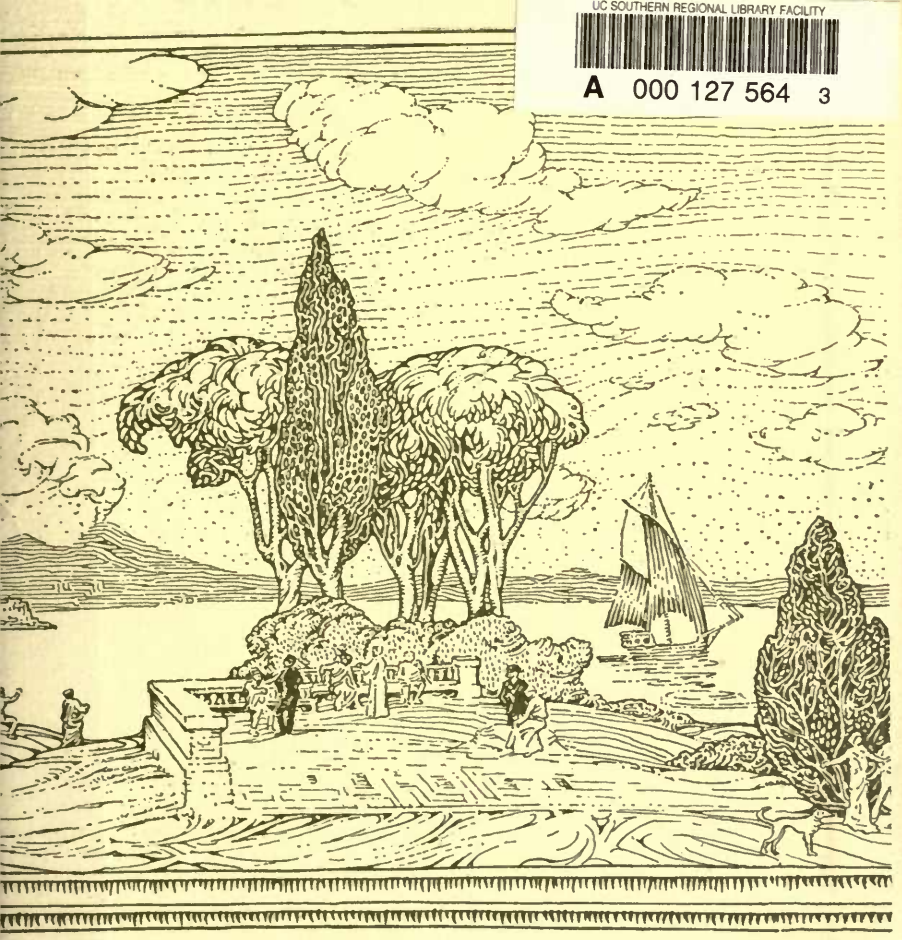
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